DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 120 573 CE 006 971

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TITLE The Relationship Between Public Relations Practices and Enrollment Patterns in Area Vocational Secondary Schools in Texas.
REPORT NO VT-102-683
PUB DATE Aug 75
NOTE 61p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; Analysis of Variance; *Area Vocational Schools; Comparative Analysis; Data Analysis; Enrollment; *Enrollment Influences; *Enrollment Trends; Program Descriptions; *Public Relations; Relationship; Research; School Surveys; Secondary Education; Tables (Data); Vocational Directors
IDENTIFIERS Texas

ABSTRACT

The central purpose of the study was to determine if a relationship existed between public relations practices and enrollment in secondary level area vocational schools in Texas. Contributing objectives of the study were: (1) to identify the degree to which selected public relations practices were being used as reported by the directors of area vocational schools; (2) to determine if public relations practices of vocational directors existed which encouraged enrollment; and (3) to identify the attitudes of directors toward public relations. The major phases of the research procedure were: (1) identification and selection of area vocational secondary schools in Texas; (2) identification of public relations practices in use by administrators; (3) identification of public relations practices that could be used by area vocational school administrators; (4) development and administration of a survey instrument to the directors to determine public relations practices and attitudes; and (5) analysis of the data. The results indicated that public relations as practiced by area vocational secondary school directors have no relationship to enrollment patterns. The report presents the background of the problem, defines the objectives, describes the procedures, and presents the findings and conclusions. Tables display the data. (Author/NJ)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES AND ENROLLMENT PATTERNS IN AREA VOCATIONAL-SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TEXAS

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES AND ENROLLMENT PATTERNS IN AREA VOCATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TEXAS

A Report of Research

by

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August 1975
VT102663

PREFACE

School personnel are becoming increasingly concerned about using those public relations practices which effectively tell their school's story and also provide for a two way flow of communications to the community as well as to prospective students. This research study by Dr. Floyd Bevers was designed to determine if a relationship existed between public relations practices and enrollment in the secondary level area vocational schools in Texas.

The findings, conclusions, and implications reported in Dr. Bevers's study should be helpful and provide "food for thought" for vocational directors, other school administrators, and Texas Education Agency personnel concerned with vocational programs.

James E. Christiansen
Associate Professor
Agricultural Education
August, 1975

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Appreciation is expressed to Mr. Ben F. Teague, Division of Public School Occupational Programs, Texas Education Agency, who provided temporary office space and valuable assistance which greatly expedited this research. Appreciation is also extended to the area school vocational directors who participated in this study.

Gratitude is expressed to the public relations experts who participated in the developmental stages of the survey instrument. The assistance of several faculty members at Texas A&M University in the design and conduct of the study is acknowledged with thankful appreciation.

Floyd G. Bevers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

Purpose of the Study 1
Significance of the Study 1
Theoretical Base of the Study 5
Hypotheses 9
Definition of Terms 10

PROCEDURE 11

Identification and Selection of Schools . . . 12
Identification of Public Relations Practices 16
Development of the Survey Instrument 17
Administration of the Survey Instrument . . . 19

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA 19

CONCLUSIONS 36

IMPLICATIONS 38

RECOMMENDATIONS 40

REFERENCES 42

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Analysis of Variance of Descriptive Data and Performance of Public Relations Practices Among Groups of Area Vocational School Directors in Texas	20
2.	Analysis of Variance of Frequency of Performance of Public Relations Practices and Attitude Toward Public Relations Among Groups of Area Vocational School Directors in Texas	20
3.	Analysis of Variance of Responses Indicating Performance of Public Relations Practices Among Groups of Area Vocational School Directors in Texas	21
4.	Analysis of Variance of Responses Indicating Performance and Frequency of Public Relations Practices Among Groups of Area Vocational School Directors in Texas	21
5.	Analysis of Variance of Responses Indicating Frequency of Performance of Public Relations Practices Among Groups of Area Vocational School Directors in Texas	22
6.	Group Responses to Public Relations Practices Indicating Performance of Practice During 1973-74 by Selected Secondary Area Vocational School Directors in Texas	23
7.	Group Responses to Public Relations Practices Indicating Performance and Description of Practice During 1973-74 by Selected Secondary Area Vocational School Directors in Texas	26

Table | Page

8. Analysis of Variance for Public Relations Practices Indicating the Frequency of Performance During 1973-74 by Selected Secondary Area Vocational School Directors in Texas 29

9. Chi-Square Distribution for Public Relations Practices Indicating Performance of Practice During 1973-74 by Selected Secondary Area Vocational School Directors in Texas 31

10. Responses to the Descriptive Scales on Attitude Toward the Concept of Public Relations Held by Selected Secondary Area Vocational School Directors in Texas 34

11. Analysis of Variance for Attitude Toward the Concept of Public Relations as Held by Selected Secondary Area Vocational School Directors in Texas 35

12. Analysis of Variance Concerning the Attitude Toward the Concept of Public Relations Among Groups of Area Vocational School Directors in Texas 36

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The central purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between public relations practices and enrollment in secondary level area vocational schools in Texas. Contributing objectives of the study were:

1. To identify the degree to which selected public relations practices were being used as reported by the directors of area vocational schools.
2. To determine whether or not public relations practices of vocational directors existed which encouraged enrollment in the vocational programs of Texas secondary schools designated as area vocational schools.
3. To identify the attitudes of directors of area vocational schools toward public relations.

Significance of the Study

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 grew out of review and reevaluation of federally aided vocational programs. Through the Act, funds were made available to establish area vocational schools. Insufficient knowledge of the degree of acceptance these new schools could expect left administrators unable to make sound decisions concerning the types of programs needed and the number of students who would enroll (Rice, 1972). This statement

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The citations on these pages follow the style of the Journal of Industrial Teacher Education.

would seem to indicate that administrators failed to communicate with students and parents on needs or interests. The relative newness of this type of school, coupled with Rice's statement, suggests that an effective system of public relations was lacking between school and clientele.

Daniel Mitch, Vice President of Look Magazine, stated the schools' responsibility candidly: "Our public schools operate, more than ever before, in the bright light of public attention. Today you can start an argument in almost any American community by uttering the word 'school' or the word 'teacher'. . . . In this atmosphere the people charged with disseminating information about the public school have a heightened responsibility (1958, p. vi)."

Candor requires admission that we have neglected in the past to use efficient and effective public relations methods because we were poorly acquainted with them or we did not choose to make sufficient effort. Traditionally, school administrators have avoided public relations efforts with the excuse that "we are educators, not promoters (McCloskey, 1959, p. 28)."

In the sixteen years that have transpired since the above statement by McCloskey, the attitudes of most school administrators have not changed significantly. Today we see that the public interest in and push for accountability has increased the demand for more information about schools from administrators. The Gallop Polls of Attitude Toward Education (Elam, 1973, p. 14) showed increased citizen interest in obtaining information about schools. The methods of gaining information most cited by those polled indicated that school administrators were not considered a primary source of information about schools. This low ranking of administrators as a source of information can be partially explained by a lack of knowledge in public relations by administrators. A recent study of school administrators produced information to substantiate this

concept. Administrators were asked to identify courses they believe would now be valuable in fulfilling their daily job obligations. Public relations was listed third behind two human relations courses (Cohodes, 1972, p. 32). The Present State of Neglect (Stiles, 1967), a study of public relations programs, showed that universities sadly neglect the public relations training of school administrators. This is further supported by an opinion poll conducted by Nation's Schools (Schoolmen Aren't Bragging, 1970, p. 31) on public relations programs of school administrators. The survey showed that administrators felt unhappy and displeased with the public relations programs now being conducted.

Prestige and goodwill are the most valuable assets any college, university, or other educational institution can possess. According to W. Emerson Reck, Vice President of Wittenberg College in Ohio, this emphasizes the importance of public relations as prestige and goodwill are tied to good public relations. "With them no institution," stated Reck, "need want for students, for opportunity or for support, even in the days of depression or inflation (Lesly, 1955, p. 386)."

Nagle (1968, p. 9) stated in agreement that "the simple fact is that an American public school district is so dependent upon its public for support, financial and otherwise, that it commits hara-kiri when it neglects the public, isolates itself from the community, leaves its citizenry either misinformed or completely uninformed."

School officials seem to believe that public relations is a tool to be used only when necessary for a bond or tax increase. Indeed, educators have used public relations to good advantage in bond elections. Concerted public relations efforts do prove a success in changing attitudes toward schools (Hoke, Basile, & Whitling, 1971). Boards of education and administration should see public relations

as continuous, coordinated communication between the district and the public, the staff and the students (Harrison, 1970).

The American Vocational Association's (AVA) emphasis on public relations and information is shown by campaign PAVE (Public Awareness of Vocational Education). M. L. Barlow, Chairman of AVA Public Information Committee, emphasized: "Planned public information programs are imperative. . . . Planning must take into account state and local situations, but planning must also provide public information on a continuous basis (Vocational PR Push, 1963. p. 34)."

Atkinson (1970, p. 27) summarized the major issues involved in the public need for information:

> While reluctance to increase support for public education need not mean that people have lost respect for public education, it does imply that they are beginning to question administrators. They want information before digging into their pockets for more money. They want to understand trends, methods, and innovations that are altering the schools they attend. They want to know too, what the schools are trying to accomplish and the extent to which they are achieving their goal.
>
> But the public's appetite for more information relates to only one aspect of communication. While it is essential to tell the public about the schools, it is also incumbent on educators to listen to the public's response to information and after serious examination to use the feedback to improve future communication.

However, the public relations practices used to inform the clientele and various publics concerned are relatively new to the field of education (Bortner, 1959, p. 9). Time and effort are spent toward developing a program of public relations without a clear answer as to whether or not it influences participation in programs of vocational secondary education in Texas. Besides this, there is no definitive picture of what should be the most promising public relations practices to be used in vocational education.

In the decade just passed, greater attention has been directed toward vocational education and development of vocational programs. The same attention, however, has not been paid in determining how to inform the various publics concerned about vocational education most effectively.

The Advisory Council for Technical-Vocational Education in Texas (ACTVE, 1974b) has identified the lack of communication between educators and the community as a major deficiency in Texas. Public awareness/communication was a frequent topic in the community conferences conducted by the Advisory Council in 1974. A recommendation from one of these conferences was: "Efforts to create a greater public awareness and involvement of vocational programs and services must be intensified and varied to reach the broad spectrum of citizen interest (ACTVE, 1974a, p. 20)." It is to these deficiencies and to efforts now exerted which this study was directed.

Theoretical Base of the Study

The literature showed a lack of training in and emphasis by vocational administrators in the area of public relations. This could have resulted in a communications gap between school and community. Billings (1970, p. 2) stated, in a workshop for improving public information for vocational programs, that little work had been done on the incoming lanes of the public information highway. He also stressed that "we still do not really know what is going on in vocational education (1970, p. 2)."

The frank admission of a spokesman for America's boards of education pointed to the lag in educational public relations. The condemning statement issued was: "We don't know what the public thinks or what the public knows and we go along operating in this void (Harrison, 1970, p. 30)." This statement, coupled with the Gallop poll of

1969 (Elam, 1973), indicate that communication between U.S. school districts and the American people is in a state of disrepair.

A study by Krejcie (1971) to learn what practices and media attracted students to technical schools showed public relations to have a positive influence. Media and practices used to present descriptions of opportunities and careers available to program graduates were highly influential. Krejcie found that the major source of students for technical schools was from high schools. Since technical school public relations methods influence high school graduates to enroll in them and since area vocational schools offer the same kinds of curricula in many instances, it is reasonable to expect that area vocational school public relations methods would also cause high school students to respond to the same methods.

The effects of lack of information and communications can produce unwanted results on enrollment figures. Georgia's area vocational schools were experiencing enrollment problems in 1964 and it seemed that probable cause was a lack of information about vocational education. A study using extensive public relations to bolster vocational enrollment proved a success (Bottoms & Swains, 1965). The results showed an increase in enrollment of 65 percent on the average in Georgia area vocational schools.

The situation of low vocational education participation is by no means a local phenomenon. The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education spoke of the problem in its 1970 report. The Council stated: "One of the major reasons why vocational education has not been more extensively developed in the public schools is that there has been little commitment to do so. The driving urge to provide vocational education has been lacking in most public schools (Gardner, 1972, p. 12)."

A California study investigated the factors which tend to inhibit the development of vocational education. Weagraff (1971) concluded in the study that the primary factor inhibiting development was lack of adequate communication from vocational educators to parents, citizen groups, students, legislators, and other educators.

In a recent study of area vocational schools and enrollment problems, Rice (1972) recommended active public relations programs as a basis for optimizing enrollment in area vocational schools. A subsequent study concerning factors that influence area vocational school enrollments was conducted by J. Marvin Robertson (1972). In the opinion of administrators, public relations factors related to communication and rapport with sending schools were reported as important influences on enrollment.

The responsibility for providing impetus and guidance for the public relations efforts in vocational education has been placed in the hands of the area vocational school directors. This is emphatically stated in a bulletin of the American Vocational Association: "One important task of the area program director and staff is to keep the cooperating school district officials, teachers, students and parents completely informed about the benefits to be derived from vocational training (AVA, 1966, p. 14)." Furthermore, interpreting the vocational school function to citizens of the area is one of the primary responsibilities of the vocational administrator of the vocational school (McDowell, 1965, p. 79). In accordance with this, a dissertation concerning the role of the vocational director in Texas also concluded that a function of the director is to inform the public of its programs (Loudermilk, 1972).

Bottoms and Swains (1965, p. 272) concluded that: "In order for individuals to take advantage of vocational

programs, not only must vocational educators make these programs available, but they must develop positive media through which to communicate these opportunities to potential students." The study pointed toward the relationship between public relations practices and enrollment in area vocational schools. However, the effect local directors have on enrollment as a result of their public relations practices or what practices seem to provide the best results were not empirically determined by the Bottoms and Swains study.

These studies indicate that administrators perceive that public relations and related practices have a marked influence on enrollment of area vocational schools. Extensive public relations programs used in area vocational schools have been shown to influence enrollment. However, data are fragmentary with respect to knowing whether or not public relations practices in area vocational schools definitely affect the enrollments of schools with different types of enrollment patterns.

As shown by the literature, school administrators have not emphasized the public relations function. Vocational directors have a similar administrative function, therefore, it seems logical to expect that vocational directors have not emphasized public relations either. Some evidence exists that this is indeed true as pointed out by the literature. Consequently, the need for examining the area of public relations practices of vocational directors seems to be apparent.

It is theorized that public relations practices do affect enrollments in area vocational schools with different enrollment patterns. It is also theorized that differences in public relations practices conducted by vocational directors in area vocational schools do exist.

Hypotheses

From the theoretical base established above, working hypotheses were derived. They were as follows:

1. Public relations practices are not different between area vocational schools with low receiving school enrollment and low sending school enrollment and those schools with high receiving school enrollment and low sending school enrollment.
2. Public relations practices are not different between area vocational schools with low receiving school enrollment and low sending school enrollment and those schools with high receiving school enrollment and high sending school enrollment.
3. Public relations practices are not different between area vocational schools with low receiving school enrollment and high sending school enrollment and those schools with high receiving school enrollment and low sending school enrollment.
4. Public relations practices are not different between area vocational schools with low receiving school enrollment and high sending school enrollment and those schools with high receiving school enrollment and high sending school enrollment.
5. Public relations practices are not different between area vocational schools with high receiving school enrollment and low sending school enrollment and those schools with high receiving school enrollment and high sending school enrollment.

6. Public relations practices are not different between area vocational schools with low receiving school enrollment and low sending school enrollment and those schools with low receiving school enrollment and high sending school enrollment.
7. Attitudes toward the concept of public relations held by directors of area vocational schools do not differ among the four different enrollment patterns identified.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are identified with respect to the context in which they were used in reporting this study.

Public Relations (PR) is a ". . . process of communication between and among schools and the community for the purpose of increasing citizen and student understanding of educational needs and practices and encouraging intelligent citizen interest and cooperation in the work of improving the school. . . . a two-way process--a cooperative search for mutual understanding and effective team work between community and school (Vocational Guidance, 1973, p. 1)."

Area Vocational School (AVS) refers to a public secondary school approved by the Texas Education Agency based on these criteria (TEA, 1963, p. 83):

> . . . as a minimum must provide a program of vocational education in five different occupational fields to meet the varying training needs of high school students in preparing for gainful employment; make available as needed special programs of occupational training for potential school dropouts and other persons having academic or other handicaps preventing them from succeeding in regular programs of vocational education; and provide programs for adults as needed to prepare them for employment or provide them training or retraining to increase their knowledge and skills in present employment.

Receiving School Enrollment is the portion of total enrollment made up of students taking vocational education in an area vocational school who are not from a sending school.

Sending School Enrollment is the portion of the total vocational enrollment in an area vocational school made up of students from a public school that has a written contract with an area vocational school which provides tuition-free participation in the AVS program for eligible students. It may be a school located in a county where the area vocational school has agreed to accept students from within the county and is entitled to county available funds on a continuing basis. A school that has enrolled in its regular program residents of a county in which an area vocational school operates is also considered to be a sending school.

Potential Vocational Student is that student who is not college bound and who could have elected to enroll in a vocational program.

Potential Vocational Student Enrollment Index is the numerical figure which reflects the percentage of vocational students of the area vocational school to the percentage of annual non-college bound students.

PROCEDURE

The major phases of the research procedure are:

1. Identification and selection of area vocational secondary schools in Texas.
2. Identification of public relations practices used by public school administrators.
3. Identification of additional public relations practices used by industry and business that could be used in public relations programs of area vocational schools.

4. Development and administration of a survey instrument to area vocational secondary school directors to determine public relations practices and attitudes.
5. Analysis of data.

Identification and Selection of Schools

Data from the Texas Education Agency (1973) provided the basis upon which decisions regarding the eligibility of area vocational schools as participants in this study were identified. The secondary area vocational schools were identified using the Secondary Vocational Unit List (1973-1974) published by TEA. The list reports for each secondary vocational school the average daily attendance, vocational schools designated as area schools, number and type of vocational units, and number of directors and supervisors. From this list the area vocational schools were identified along with the average daily attendance of each school.

Data concerning the number of vocational students in the area vocational school, names of the sending schools, and number of students from sending schools were obtained from the annual school district report forms for occupational education filed at TEA. Additional data covering the number of non-college bound students were retrieved from microfiche data files at TEA.

For this study, the area secondary vocational schools were divided into four groups. These four groups were as follows: high receiving school/high sending school index; high receiving school/low sending school index; low receiving school/high sending school index; and low receiving school/low sending school index.

Each of the four groups represent a combination of two factors: (1) potential vocational student enrollment index of the area vocational school and (2) potential vocational student enrollment index of the sending school district. The potential vocational student enrollment index was established using a

combination of the average daily attendance of the school, the number of vocational students, the number of graduating seniors and the number of seniors electing not to go to college. These factors were utilized in establishing the potential vocational student enrollment index of both the sending school and the receiving school enrollment groups.

In order to establish the percentage of vocational students (%VS), the following formula was established for computations:

$$\%VS = \frac{\text{N of VS}}{\text{ADA}}$$

where N of VS = number of vocational students of the school and ADA = average daily attendance of the school.

The percentage of non-college bound (%NCB) was determined by utilizing the following formula:

$$\%NCB = \frac{\text{N of SNE}}{\text{N of GS}}$$

where N of SNE = number of seniors of the school (1973-74) not electing to go to college and N of GS = number of 1973-74 graduating seniors of the school. This method of determining the percentage of non-college bound students was chosen because of the following:

1. Information on college or non-college choice was not available for other student groups.
2. These students represented those who could have gone completely through the school system under the influence of the respective public relations practices.

After computing these two figures, the percentage of vocational students and the percentage of non-college bound were combined in establishing the ratio reflecting the potential vocational student enrollment index.

The potential area vocational school student enrollment index (PAVSEI) was computed utilizing the following formula:

$$PAVSEI = \frac{\%VS}{\%NCB}$$

where %VS = percentage of vocational students and %NCB = percentage of non-college bound students. The sending school potential vocational student enrollment index was determined in a like manner. The ratio reflecting the potential sending school vocational student enrollment index (SSVEI) was computed utilizing the following formula:

$$SSVEI = \frac{\%VS}{\%NCB}$$

where %VS = percentage of vocational students attending the area vocational school and %NCB = percentage of non-college bound students.

The selection of secondary area vocational schools for the study was made on the basis of the potential vocational student enrollment index. After the index was computed for each school, both the receiving schools and sending schools were ranked in order to determine high and low categories, respectively. First, the receiving schools were ranked according to their PAVSEI. From this ranking the upper quartile (top 25 percent) and the lowest quartile (bottom 25 percent) were designated high and low categories, respectively. The sending schools were then ranked according to their SSVEI and high and low categories were designated in the same manner as for the receiving schools.

The top 25 percent and the bottom 25 percent of the index ratings were utilized because they represent the extremes from the "normal." "The middle 50 percent is important because it defines the range of 'normal' performance. The upper 25 percent is somewhat better, and the lowest 25 percent somewhat poorer than the middle or average group (Garrett, 1966, p. 99)." Therefore, the upper and lowest 25 percent were used to represent the

groups having above and below "normal" indices (PAVSEI and SSVEI). In this manner high and low categories indicated above average and below average potential vocational student enrollment.

All the area vocational schools were ranked according to their index and their respective sending school enrollment index was noted. In this manner each area vocational school had both a receiving school enrollment index and a sending school enrollment index designated for it. Thus, each of the four groups was based on the receiving and sending school index. Therefore, each of the schools within the four enrollment pattern groups was represented by a combination of high and low PAVSEI and SSVEI. From these combinations of potential vocational student enrollment index ratings, schools were selected to form the four groups which were as follows: high receiving/low sending school index; high receiving/high sending school index; low receiving/high sending school index; and low receiving/low sending school index.

The potential vocational student enrollment index was also computed in a second manner as a means of verifying the ranking of schools within quartiles. The same quartile ranking of the area vocational schools occurred. The second method was different in that the ratio used reflected the number of vocational students in an area vocational program to the number of non-college bound students for the 1973-74 school year. The second method yielded rankings similar to the quartile rankings of the first method which was detailed in preceding paragraphs.

In the interest of brevity, the four groups will be henceforth referred to numerically as follows:

Group I: high receiving school with low sending school index

Group II: high receiving school with high sending school index

Group III: low receiving school with low sending school index

Group IV: low receiving school with high sending school index

The schools randomly selected from the index quartile rankings resulted in 10 schools being placed in group I, 8 schools in group II, 12 schools in group III, and 7 schools in group IV. The small numbers in groups II and IV resulted because of the small number of area vocational schools meeting the criteria established for those categories.

Geographically, the 37 schools represented much of the State of Texas. Areas represented included the Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, North-Central and South-Central sections as well as the coastal region. Also, a geographic dispersion was noted among each of the four groups constituting the 37 schools in the study.

Another diversity lay in the size of the cities representing the area vocational schools in the four groups. These ranged from 654,000 to 2,700 in population. Group I population size varied from 22,000 to 2,700. Group II ranged from 29,000 to 5,900 in size. Group III varied from 654,000 to 15,000 and group IV ranged from 41,000 to 2,900.

Information concerning the diversities was to support the representativeness of the four groups of area vocational schools due to differences in social, financial, industrial, and cultural heritage within the state. The diversities noted insured that no one group was totally represented by a distinct region or population size. Therefore, these diversities allow some assurance that the data would not be skewed causing bias.

Identification of Public Relations Practices

The public relations practices considered in this study

were derived from three sources: (1) school-community public relations developed in a dissertation by Young (1964); (2) areas determined by Pinson (1967) to be important in public relations practices; and (3) elements identified by Kerr (1963).

The public relations practices derived from these sources, in some cases, were very general and not directly applicable to vocational administration. To correct this shortcoming, a survey of the literature utilizing both hand and computer searches, discussion with vocational education personnel, and utilization of firsthand knowledge and observation as a vocational teacher were employed. The utilization of the three basic literature sources plus the other sources enumerated above resulted in the identification of 66 public relations practices applicable to vocational administration.

An attempt to identify additional public relations practices used by industry and business that could be used in public relations programs of area vocational schools proved relatively unfruitful. As a study of the literature revealed, the public relations practices used by schools are copied from industry and business. Even a business-based computer search failed to produce public relations practices used effectively by industry and business that were not identified in the vocational public relations literature.

Development of the Survey Instrument

After the identification of the vocational public relations practices was completed, statements concerning each practice were written. These statements were developed using the following criteria: simplicity, directness, brevity, clarity, and relevance. The statements were then incorporated into a public relations practices survey instrument.

The format of the instrument consisted of three major parts. Part I provided general and descriptive information. The information was obtained from responses made to forced choice categories of different sizes.

The indication of performance of public relations practices and the frequency of performance of the practices formed the second major part of the instrument. A yes/no response scale was used to elicit public relations practices of the area secondary vocational school directors. A few of the yes/no response questions provided for the indication of frequency or description of the practice. A comment space was provided by each yes/no response for respondents to qualify their answers. A Likert-type scale was utilized to indicate the frequency of public relations practices. A five-point scale consisted of the following choices: (1) not at all, (2) 1 to 2 times, (3) 3 to 5 times, (4) 6 to 9 times, and (5) 10 or more times.

The third part of the instrument consisted of a semantic differential attitude scale designed to determine the attitude toward the concept of public relations held by secondary area vocational school directors. Fifteen bi-polar scales pertaining to the concept of public relations made up the attitude scale. The 15 bi-polar scales consisted of adjective word pairs, 12 of which were previously used and validated by Garrison (1974). The three remaining bi-polar adjectives were selected from a list reported by Isaac and Michael (1972).

To refine the instrument for greater relevancy, better clarity, and format it was reviewed by a jury of six knowledgeable persons in the public relations field. Changes were made in the survey instrument according to jury members' suggestions.

The rating scale format was selected because it allowed a respondent a quick and easy means of answering. While this technique may not be ideal, the alternatives were too costly and time consuming for both respondent and researcher. The

decision was made to use rating scales knowing that the low N's of the groups would affect the power and discrimination of statistical tests. This was done acknowledging that some undetermined degree of accuracy might be sacrificed.

Administration of the Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was administered to 205 participants in the annual workshop for vocational directors held in Austin, Texas, March 17-19, 1975, with the cooperation of the Division of Public School Occupational Programs, Texas Education Agency. A portion of the time of the workshop focused on school-community relations. Completing the survey instrument was an activity scheduled for this time. Through this method of administering the instrument, almost the total population of vocational directors in the State of Texas was reached. However, since not all vocational directors were present at the workshop, four schools out of the 37 schools selected for the sample had to have the instrument mailed to them. The survey instrument was administered by Texas Education Agency personnel. This was done at the request of those conducting the workshop. In this way the survey instrument was not identified in any way as doctoral research.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Three statistical techniques were utilized in analyzing the findings of the study. The methods of analysis involved computation of the following:

1. Descriptive statistics for all variables.
2. Chi-square for homogeneity between groups.
3. One-way analysis of variance to determine differences among groups.

An analysis of variance was performed on all variables of the survey instrument. In analyzing the differences among groups with different enrollment patterns and their responses to all variables on the instrument there was found to be no significant difference as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF DESCRIPTIVE DATA AND PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES AMONG GROUPS OF AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Source	Mean Square	df	F-Ratio	p
Total	10.0180	36		
Groups	14.3481	3	1.481	0.2368
Error	9.6899	33		

* significant at the .05 level (none)

TABLE 2

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF FREQUENCY OF PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES AND ATTITUDE TOWARD PUBLIC RELATIONS AMONG GROUPS OF AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Source	Mean Square	df	F-Ratio	p
Total	9.6366	36		
Groups	22.2840	3	2.626	0.9658
Error	8.4869	33		

* significant at the .05 level (none)

To determine if a relationship existed between different public relations practices and enrollment in secondary level area vocational schools in Texas, as stated in hypotheses 1 - 6, an analysis of variance was performed by enrollment

groups. In analyzing the responses of enrollment pattern groups on the performance of public relations practices as indicated by selected area vocational school directors in Texas, no significant difference was found. Tables 3 and 4 present these data. Further, the frequency of performance of public relations practices indicated by area vocational school directors shows no significant difference among enrollment pattern groups as presented in Table 5.

TABLE 3

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF RESPONSES INDICATING PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES AMONG GROUPS OF AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Source	Mean Square	df	F-Ratio	p
Total	7.4970	36		
Groups	6.5000	3	0.857	0.3243
Error	7.5876	33		

* significant at the .05 level (none)

TABLE 4

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF RESPONSES INDICATING PERFORMANCE AND FREQUENCY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES AMONG GROUPS OF AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Source	Mean Square	df	F-Ratio	p
Total	11.9789	36		
Groups	9.6797	3	0.794	0.5085
Error	12.1879	33		

* significant at the .05 level (none)

TABLE 5

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF RESPONSES INDICATING FREQUENCY OF PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES AMONG GROUPS OF AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Source	Mean Square	df	F-Ratio	p
Total	7.4354	36		
Groups	8.6953	3	1.188	0.3294
Error	7.3208	33		

* significant at the .05 level (none)

The first contributing objective of the study, to identify the degree to which selected public relations practices are used by area vocational school directors, is displayed in Tables 6 and 7 showing percentages and means.

In attempting to determine whether public relations practices existed which encourage enrollment in vocational programs in Texas, the data showed no significant differences among the enrollment pattern groups. Group II (high receiving school/high sending school index) area vocational school directors had been assumed to be utilizing public relations practices differently than other enrollment pattern groups. Since the potential vocational student enrollment index of group II was higher than that of the other enrollment pattern groups, it was seen as a model for identifying public relations practices that could encourage enrollment. However, group II respondents were found to be practicing public relations no differently than other enrollment pattern group respondents. In addition, since the relationship between enrollment pattern groups and public relations practices was not significant and the effectiveness of the public relations as practiced by area vocational school directors was not identified, it is difficult to determine, if in fact, certain public relations practices can and do encourage enrollment.

TABLE 6

GROUP RESPONSES TO PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES INDICATING PERFORMANCE OF PRACTICE DURING 1973-74 BY SELECTED SECONDARY AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

	Variable	Percent of Responses		Mean
		Yes	No	
1.	Have open-door policy	100	0	1.0000
2.	Arrange for school patrons to visit classes	97	3	1.0270
3.	Utilize staff's personal contacts to advance programs	97	3	1.0270
4.	Encourage staff to report opinions on programs	95	5	1.0541
5.	Utilize open house	95	5	1.0541
6.	Request teachers to inform parents about projects	95	5	1.0541
7.	Publicize student banquets	95	5	1.0541
8.	Publicize American Vocational Week activities	92	8	1.0811
9.	Utilize advisory councils as communications link	92	8	1.0811
10.	Fulfill request of counselors on information sources	92	8	1.0811
11.	Utilize follow-up of graduates to promote programs	89	11	1.1081
12.	Communicate with legislators in Austin	86	14	1.1351
13.	Provide visibility for programs in American Education Week activities	86	14	1.1351
14.	Arrange for student clubs to assist local civic campaigns	78	22	1.2162
15.	Analyze editorial opinion, letters to the editor, and election trends	68	32	1.3243
16.	Use proclamations by the mayor	68	32	1.3243

TABLE 6 --Continued

	Variable	Percent of Responses Yes	No	Mean
17.	Encourage vocational faculty to participate in community activities	65	35	1.3514
18.	Open house for academic faculty	62	38	1.3784
19.	Plan public relations activities to involve all segments of the community	59	41	1.4054
20.	Utilize follow-up of graduates to develop file of resource persons	57	43	1.4324
21.	Publicize career day/night	51	49	1.4865
22.	Present advisory groups with certificates or plaques	51	49	1.4865
23.	Form Ad Hoc committees as consultants	49	51	1.5135
24.	Conduct student opinion polls	49	51	1.5135
25.	Sponsor a vocational fair/ exhibition	49	51	1.5135
26.	Poll citizens	46	54	1.5405
27.	Use local industry displays	43	57	1.5676
28.	Publish a list of community resource persons	41	59	1.5946
29.	Keep complete records of public relations activities	30	70	1.7027
30.	Utilize results of opinion polls for change in public relations program	27	73	1.7297
31.	Budget monies for public relations efforts	27	73	1.7297
32.	Display billboard advertising	24	76	1.7568
33.	Prepare mailing list to receive publications	24	76	1.7568
34.	Provide a school vocational activity calendar	24	76	1.7568

TABLE 6 --Continued

Variable	Percent of Responses Yes	No	Mean
35. Utilize Ad Hoc faculty committee in revising public relations efforts	14	86	1.8649
36. Use report card stuffers	3	97	1.9730

TABLE 7

GROUP RESPONSES TO PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES INDICATING PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICE DURING 1973-74 BY SELECTED SECONDARY AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Variable	Percent of Yes Responses	Percent of Responses	
		Yes	No
1. Publish brochure on programs		78	22
Time between revisions:			
1 year	30		
2 years	20		
3 years	33		
4 years or more	17		
2. Systematically evaluate the public relations program		39	61
Frequency of evaluation:			
Weekly	21		
Monthly	15		
Quarterly	7		
Bi-Annually	15		
Annually	42		
3. Utilize bumper stickers		24	76
Number distributed:			
0-100	33		
101-500	33		
501-1000	33		
1000+	0		

TABLE 7

RELATIONS PRACTICES INDICATING PERFORMANCE AND
ICE DURING 1973-74 BY SELECTED SECONDARY
IONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

	Percent of Yes Responses	Percent of Responses		
		Yes	No	Mean
s		78	22	1.2162
	30			
	20			
	33			
	17			2.9189
public		39	61	1.5676
	21			
	15			
	7			
	15			
	42			2.2432
		24	76	1.7568
	33			
	33			
	33			
	0			1.3243

TABLE 7 --Continued

Variable	Percent of Yes Responses	Percent of Responses Yes	No
4. Plan a written public relations program		22	78
Program description:			
Well defined and functions continuously	13		
Well defined and functions only part of the time	50		
Not definitely organized but functions	37		
5. Send local vocational news bulletin to parents		16	84
Frequency of distribution:			
Monthly	17		
Quarterly	17		
Bi-Annually	32		
Annually	17		
Other (bi-weekly)	17		
6. Publish vocational alumni newsletter		8	92
Frequency of distribution:			
Monthly	33		
Quarterly	0		
Bi-Annually	0		
Annually	33		
Other (every six weeks)	33		

TABLE 7 --Continued

	Percent of Yes Responses	Percent of Responses		Mean
		Yes	No	
tions		22	78	1.7297
tions	13			
tions only	50			
ted but	37			1.4595
bulletin		16	84	1.8378
on:				
	17			
	17			
	32			
	17			
	17			1.5405
newsletter		8	92	1.9730
on:				
	33			
	0			
	0			
	33			
)	33			1.2432

Although no significant difference was indicated among groups, in individual variable analysis it was found that the public relations practice of utilizing bumper stickers was found to be significant at the .05 level of significance. Table 8 shows this practice to be the only variable significant. Moreover, the qualifying response (the number of bumper stickers distributed) was also shown to be significant. The analysis of public relations practices indicating frequency of performance by area vocational school directors, Table 9, showed no variable to be significant at the .05 level.

With respect to hypothesis 7, the attitude of area vocational school directors was positive in regard to the bi-polar adjective scale on the concept of public relations as indicated in Table 10. The bi-polar adjectives hard/soft was the only variable found to be significant at the .05 level of significance as shown in Table 11. However, Table 12 shows that there was no significant difference among enrollment pattern groups as related to attitude toward the concept of public relations.

The statistical analysis of the data does not permit a general rejection of hypotheses 1 through 6 concerning the difference in public relations practices between the four enrollment pattern groups represented in the study. Although no significant difference was found between groups, in the individual analysis of public relations practices the utilization of bumper stickers in the yes/no response category showed a significant difference at the .01 level.

The basic hypothesis concerning attitude of vocational directors in area vocational secondary schools was not rejected because no significant difference was found among groups. In the individual item analysis, attitude bi-polar adjectives hard/soft showed a significant difference among groups at the .05 level.

TABLE 8

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES INDICATING THE FREQUENCY OF PERFORMANCE DURING 1973-74 BY SELECTED SECONDARY AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Variable	F Value	Prob > F	Mean
Provide inservice training	0.0541	0.9825	1.2702
Participate in PTA programs	1.6262	0.2010	1.9189
Utilize bulletin boards at feeder schools	1.9084	0.1463	2.9730
Use locally made visuals	0.6635	0.5836	4.2973
Publicize student visits to industry	1.2615	0.3032	2.5405
Make presentations before civic organizations	0.9456	0.5683	4.2162
Prepare news releases	0.2969	0.8289	6.8108
Prepare student newspaper articles	0.5528	0.6538	5.2432
Organize a vocational student speaker bureau	0.7887	0.5115	1.9189
Use faculty speaker bureau	0.2914	0.8327	1.4324
Use merchant window displays	0.3607	0.7843	1.8919
Publish staff recognition and awards	0.6794	0.5741	3.9459
Submit follow-up stories of special events	0.9578	0.5741	5.2703
Produce local television program	0.3915	0.7629	1.3243
Use radio "spots"	0.3837	0.7684	3.8108
Maintain personal contact with local leaders	0.2518	0.8602	7.5946
Use direct mail to promote programs	1.9641	0.1374	3.5135
Visit feeder schools to talk to students	0.5593	0.6495	3.2432
Arrange tours of programs for schools	0.9500	0.5705	3.2973

TABLE 8--Continued

Variable	F Value	Prob > F	Mean
Publish vocational contest winners	0.2839	0.8380	6.5676
Arrange for students to visit local industries	0.1887	0.9031	4.4324
Produce radio programs	0.0445	0.9867	0.7297
Prepare television spots	2.4135	0.0832	0.8647
Use FM radio "spots"	0.7538	0.5308	1.4865

* significant at the .05 level (none)

TABLE 9

CHI-SQUARE DISTRIBUTION FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES INDICATING PERFORMANCE OF PRACTICE DURING 1973-74 BY SELECTED SECONDARY AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Variable	X^2	$p > X^2$	df
Budget monies for public relations efforts	3.4148	0.3320	3
Publicize career day/night	0.9499	0.8154	3
Have open-door policy	*Insufficient different observations for X^2*		
Provide visibility for programs in American Education Week activities	2.5713	0.4649	3
Publicize American Vocational Week activities	2.8868	0.4108	3
Use proclamations by the mayor	1.1507	0.7681	3
Sponsor a vocational fair/ exhibition	1.3501	0.7212	3
Utilize open house	1.4712	0.6931	3
Use report card stuffers	2.1412	0.5472	3
Keep complete records of public relations activities	1.7208	0.6365	3
Arrange for student clubs to assist local civic campaigns	2.0444	0.5670	3
Use local industry displays	1.4266	0.7034	3
Display billboard advertising	0.1751	0.9760	3
Prepare mailing list to receive publications	3.4605	0.3259	3
Encourage staff to report opinions on programs	2.2861	0.5184	3
Conduct student opinion polls	4.7622	0.1883	3
Poll citizens	4.5294	0.2081	3
Analyze editorial opinion, letters to the editor, and election trends	1.6396	0.6547	3
Present advisory groups with certificates or plaques	0.8498	0.8387	3

TABLE 9--Continued

Variable	χ^2	$p > \chi^2$	df
Form Ad Hoc committees as consultants	1.3501	0.7212	3
Publicize student banquets	1.9601	0.5847	3
Utilize staff's personal contacts to advance programs	2.1412	0.5472	3
Arrange for school patrons to visit classes	2.7750	0.4294	3
Utilize advisory councils as communications link	1.4488	0.6983	3
Request teachers to inform parents about projects	3.1242	0.3737	3
Publish a list of community resource persons	0.8934	0.8286	3
Utilize follow-up of graduates to develop file of resource persons	0.3740	0.9414	3
Plan public relations activities to involve all segments of the community	3.6096	0.3065	3
Open house for academic faculty	3.0686	0.3821	3
Provide a school vocational activity calendar	2.9561	0.3397	3
Utilize results of opinion polls for change in public relations program	2.5272	0.4728	3
Utilize follow-up of graduates to promote programs	1.3057	0.7316	3
Encourage vocational faculty to participate in community activities	2.8899	0.4103	3
Communicate with legislators in Austin	0.6461	0.8849	3
Fulfill request of counselors on information sources	0.8736	0.8332	3
Utilize Ad Hoc faculty committee in revising public relations efforts	2.2046	0.5344	3

TABLE 9--Continued

Variable	χ^2	$p > \chi^2$	df
Utilize bumper stickers	18.6716	0.0004**	3
Number of bumper stickers distributed	19.0485	0.0042**	6
Send local vocational news bulletin to parents	2.4420	0.4886	3
Frequency of distribution of news bulletin	14.3496	0.4995	15
Publish vocational alumni newsletter	2.1412	0.5472	3
Frequency of distribution of alumni newsletter	6.4939	0.3702	6
Publish brochure on programs	1.1804	0.7611	3
Time period between revisions of brochure	14.3599	0.2778	12
Systematically evaluate the public relations program	2.5083	0.4763	3
Frequency of program evaluation	9.6694	0.8406	15
Plan a written public relations program	2.4258	0.4916	3
Statement which best describes the public relations program	5.5150	0.7886	9

* significant at .05 level
** significant at .01 level

TABLE 10

RESPONSES TO THE DESCRIPTIVE SCALES ON ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CONCEPT PUBLIC RELATIONS HELD BY SELECTED SECONDARY AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Positive Adjective	Percent of Responses for Each Level of the 7-Point Scale							Ne Adj
strong	49	19	8	14	3	3	5	
important	62	22	8	8	0	0	0	unimp
active	43	19	19	16	3	0	0	P
solid	32	30	19	16	3	0	0	
understandable	49	22	14	8	3	3	3	myst
kind	38	27	14	16	5	0	0	
rapid	38	19	8	32	3	0	0	
simple	22	14	14	30	11	8	3	compl
powerful	41	16	22	19	3	0	0	
successful	46	24	14	14	3	0	0	unsucc
excitable	32	19	8	30	5	5	0	
true	49	24	8	16	3	0	0	
hard	3	19	5	65	0	5	3	
fast	22	14	24	38	3	0	0	
good	62	16	8	8	5	0	0	

TABLE 10

IVE SCALES ON ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF
D BY SELECTED SECONDARY AREA VOCATIONAL
OOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

cent of Responses for evel of the 7-Point Scale					Negative Adjective
8	14	3	3	5	weak
8	8	0	0	0	unimportant
19	16	3	0	0	passive
19	16	3	0	0	frail
14	8	3	3	3	mysterious
14	16	5	0	0	cruel
8	32	3	0	0	still
14	30	11	8	3	complicated
22	19	3	0	0	puny
14	14	3	0	0	unsuccessful
8	30	5	5	0	calm
8	16	3	0	0	false
5	65	0	5	3	soft
24	38	3	0	0	slow
8	8	5	0	0	bad

TABLE 11

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AS HELD BY SELECTED SECONDARY AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Variable	F Value	p > F	Mean
weak/strong	0.6481	0.5932	5.6757
important/unimportant	0.3581	0.7862	1.5946
active/passive	1.6212	0.2021	2.1351
frail/solid	1.2009	0.3246	5.7297
understandable/mysterious	0.7420	0.5374	2.1351
cruel/kind	0.6101	0.6169	5.7567
rapid/still	0.2624	0.8529	2.3784
simple/complicated	1.5342	0.2229	3.3243
powerful/puny	0.8324	0.5117	2.2703
successful/unsuccessful	0.4888	0.6962	2.0541
calm/excitable	1.3426	0.2767	5.3784
false/true	0.5480	0.6569	6.0270
hard/soft	3.7699	0.0194*	3.7567
slow/fast	0.5503	0.6554	5.2162
good/bad	0.1661	0.9180	1.7567

* significant at the .05 level

TABLE 12

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE CONCERNING THE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AMONG GROUPS OF AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DIRECTORS IN TEXAS

Source	Mean Square	df	F-Ratio	p
Total	6.9909	36		
Groups	4.2529	3	0.587	0.6313
Error	7.2398	33		

* significant at the .05 level (none)

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from this study should be considered in relation to the hypotheses, purpose, and objectives previously established. Based on the resulting analyses of data, the following conclusions were formulated:

Since the findings revealed no significant difference with respect to public relations practices and enrollment pattern groups, it was concluded that hypotheses 1 through 6 could be accepted. Further, since the findings revealed no significant difference among groups on the attitude toward the concept of public relations, a conclusion was drawn accepting hypothesis 7.

Based on the fact that the hypotheses 1 through 7 could be supported, additional conclusions were drawn relating to the findings. These were:

1. Area vocational secondary school directors with different enrollment patterns do not perceive public relations practices differently.
2. Public relations as practiced by area vocational secondary school directors apparently have no relationship to enrollment patterns in Texas area vocational schools.

3. Attitude of area vocational directors toward the concept of public relations does not differ significantly among the different enrollment patterns studied. This appears to bear out research and expert opinion in the field which contend that educators are in favor of public relations regardless of what they actually do in performing public relations.
4. The group with the highest potential student index (group II) showed no significant difference with other groups in the public relations practices performed. Therefore, it is concluded that the group with the highest potential student index (high enrollment) pursues public relations effecting enrollment no differently than any of the other enrollment pattern groups studied.

Other conclusions were:

1. Bumper stickers used to give vocational programs wider coverage was the only public relations practice in area vocational secondary schools which showed a significant difference in performance. Further, significant differences were indicated among groups in the number of bumper stickers distributed.
2. Although there was a significant difference for the above variables concerning bumper stickers, it can not be concluded that the use of bumper stickers would encourage enrollment in programs. This is due to the fact that those using the bumper stickers to the greatest extent are those in the low enrollment pattern group categories.
3. There is apparently not a widespread use of written plans, recordkeeping, or systematic evaluation of public relations practices performed by directors of area vocational secondary schools.

4. The total population of Texas vocational directors surveyed in the workshop and the selected area vocational directors in this study indicated similar responses in the performance of public relations practices and the attitude toward the concept of public relations. It was therefore concluded that area vocational directors with different enrollment patterns perform public relations and hold attitudes toward public relations very much the same as other vocational directors in Texas.

It was further concluded that the lack of statistical significance in the conclusions should not necessarily be interpreted as an unequivocal rejection of possible relationships among variables. The limited number of observations utilized in the study population restricts the statistical level of significance because of the limited degrees of freedom associated with the number of observations.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions evolving from this study and within the statistical level of significance set for acceptance or rejection of the null hypotheses developed for this study, the following implications are presented:

1. In the descriptive data collected from the area vocational school directors, it was noted that a large majority had no written plan for their public relations programs during the year. It is implied that area vocational school directors either do not see the need for written plans in the area of public relations or public relations is not considered important enough to merit a written plan.
2. Data revealed that a large majority of the area vocational school directors in the study do not keep complete records of public relations activities.

This would imply that the public relations programs are kept entirely in and depend upon the memory of the area vocational school director. This is based on the fact that no written records are kept before or after the public relations practices are performed. The implication that vocational directors can remember all aspects of the public relations program and activities undertaken during the year is highly contentious.

3. Based on the findings, a majority of area vocational directors indicated they performed no systematic evaluation of their public relations efforts. Not only do area vocational directors perform their public relations programs without written plans or records, but they also fail to evaluate the efforts exerted in public relations. This has implications for the quality of the public relations programs since the effectiveness of public relations efforts can not be realistically determined without systematic evaluation.
4. A majority of vocational directors indicated that citizen and student opinion polls of vocational programs were not conducted. This is a generally accepted practice in determining initial needs and in revising vocational programs to meet changing needs of students. There is an implication that some area vocational school directors are not assuming the proper leadership in regard to establishing and revising vocational programs in area vocational secondary schools.
5. The analysis of data showed that a majority of area vocational school directors utilize the news media in their public relations programs. However, other mass media techniques are not being pursued. Production of radio and television programs, and

preparation of television and radio "spots" and FM radio "spots" are used by a minority of the directors. Area vocational school directors are apparently not taking advantage of the influence of mass media. This could imply that public relations training is lacking in the area of educational technology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. Since this study dealt only with the relationship of public relations practices to enrollment pattern groups in area vocational secondary schools, there exists the need for research to determine the effectiveness of public relations as practiced by area vocational secondary school directors in Texas. This need was identified due to the fact that vocational directors generally perform the practices set forth in the survey yet variation in enrollment patterns exists. Although public relations practices are generally performed, the intensity, the groups affected, application of the practices, and subsequent effect on enrollment patterns in area vocational schools are not known.
2. A study should be conducted to determine if large, medium, and small school district vocational directors practice public relations differently.
3. Research should be conducted to determine how and why public relations practices are pursued without a written plan or systematic evaluation by area vocational secondary school directors.
4. Inservice education should be provided to vocational directors in establishing written public relations

plans, methods of evaluating public relations programs, and utilization of current vocational information such as follow-up to enrich a public relations program.

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